



ARTAMUS PERSONATUS: Gould.



## ARTAMUS PERSONATUS, *Gould.*

### Masked Wood Swallow.

*Ocypterus personatus*, Gould. in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part VIII. p. 149.

*Jil-bung*, Aborigines of the mountain districts of Western Australia.

---

I HAVE much pleasure in adding this new and highly interesting species of *Artamus* to the Wood Swallows of Australia, a country peculiarly adapted for this tribe of birds, and of which the fauna comprises a greater number of species of this group than that of any other. My knowledge of the range of this species is very limited; a single specimen was sent me from South Australia, while the fine examples from which my figures were taken were killed by Mr. Gilbert in the colony of Swan River. Its richly coloured black face and throat, separated from the delicate grey of the breast by a narrow line of snowy white, at once distinguishes it from every other species, while the strong contrast of these colours renders it a conspicuous object among the trees.

In size and structure it more nearly resembles the *Artamus superciliosus* than any other, and the two species form beautiful analogues of each other, one being in all probability confined to the eastern portion of the country, and the other to the western.

“ I have only met,” says Mr. Gilbert, “ with this species in the York and Zoodyay districts. It is very like *Artamus sordidus* in its habits, but is more shy and retired, never being seen but in the most secluded parts of the bush. It is merely a summer visitant here, generally making its appearance in the latter part of October, and immediately commencing the task of incubation. Its voice very much resembles the chirping of the English Sparrow.

“ Its nest is placed in the upright fork of a dead tree, or in the hollow part of the stump of a grass-tree; it is neither so well nor so neatly formed as those of the other species of the group, being a frail structure externally composed of a very few extremely small twigs, above which is a layer of fine dried grasses. The eggs also differ as remarkably as the nest, their ground colour being light greenish grey, dashed and speckled with hair-brown principally at the larger end, and slightly spotted with grey, appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell; they are ten and a half lines long by eight and a half lines broad. I found two nests in a York Gum Forest, about five miles to the east of the Avon River: each of these contained two eggs, which I believe is the usual number.

“ Its food consists of insects generally and their larvæ.”

The male has the face, ear-coverts and throat jet-black, bounded below with a narrow line of white; crown of the head sooty black, gradually passing into the deep grey, which covers the whole of the upper surface, wings and tail; the latter tipped with white; all the under surface very delicate grey; thighs dark grey; irides blackish brown; bill blue at the base, becoming black at the tip; legs and feet mealy bluish grey.

The female differs in having the colouring of the bill and the black mask on the face much paler.

The figures are those of a male and a female of the natural size.